



<http://ctrlclickcast.com/episodes/2013-year-in-review>

CTRL+CLICK CAST #9 2013 Year in Review

[Music]

Lea Alcantara: You are listening to CTRL+CLICK CAST. We inspect the web for you. Today we're taking a look back at 2013 in our annual year-end review. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host:

Emily Lewis: Emily Lewis.

Lea Alcantara: This episode is sponsored by [Visual Chefs](#). (They have a super cute ad on our site for the holidays so you should check it out.) They provide web development focusing on content management system integration and custom web application development. Visit visualchefs.com to find out more.

Emily Lewis: CTRL+CLICK would also like to thank [Pixel & Tonic](#) for being our major sponsor of the year. [Music ends] Hey Lea, how was your Thanksgiving?

Lea Alcantara: Pretty good. I made a new friend at a foodie meetup.

Emily Lewis: Ooooh!

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Those are good friends to have.

Lea Alcantara: I know.

Emily Lewis: Those who like to eat. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs] Exactly! And not only that, she's actually a trained chef.

Emily Lewis: Oh, that's even better!



Lea Alcantara: I know! I know! So when she found out Rob and I weren't really doing anything for Thanksgiving originally (except shopping) she was like, "Okay, you have to come to my party." So she had this huge party with like really way too much food as per holiday rules, I guess. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And yeah, I know it was delicious. It was fun and there was some Xbox dancing involved as well.

Emily Lewis: Fun.

Lea Alcantara: So that was great. How was your Thanksgiving?

Emily Lewis: Oh, it was really, really, really nice. My sister came for a visit and as things worked out, you were handling the podcast that week and we had a client change the schedule on something, and so I ended up having a whole lot more free time that week than I thought that I would.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And so we did some hiking and a little bit of shopping. I'm really not a shopper, but my sister wanted to get some like holiday presents for her friends back in Maryland, and we did tons and tons of cooking and even more eating. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: I feel like it took me like three days to recover from the food hangover. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I know what you mean. It's basically like eat, eat, eat, and then it feels like you're never going to be hungry again. [Laughs]



Emily Lewis: [Laughs] Well, and I really tried to like be, like consider it like normal non-holiday eating. But then Thanksgiving hit and we had gone shopping and we had so much stuff, and we wanted to make all of it, and so we did. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: We ate it for the next three days. But yeah, it was so nice, and my sister is really like my favorite person on the planet.

Lea Alcantara: Awww.

Emily Lewis: So we just had a great time together.

Lea Alcantara: Hurray!

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: That sounds like fun.

Emily Lewis: A good, good way to go into the holiday season.

Lea Alcantara: Awesome. So why don't we get into news in our world?

Emily Lewis: Sounds good.

Lea Alcantara: In our world, The net Awards are back.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: And we'd love to be nominated for Podcast of the Year, so if you love listening to the podcast, we would really appreciate a nomination. It's thenetawards.com and we'll have the link to the show notes.



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Emily Lewis: Awesome. So also, we wanted to let our listeners know that this month, we're doing a [holiday campaign for our podcast sponsors](#). For any site sponsorship paid for by December 31st, 100% of the proceeds are going to send girls to school via Heifer International.

Lea Alcantara: Right. So we're doing this in conjunction with Emily Lewis Design. We wanted to thank our clients and colleagues this year in a way that pays it forward, so we decided to donate to send two girls to school in honor of our clients and colleagues.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: For our podcast sponsors, they can help us send *even more* girls to school by purchasing a site sponsorship.

Emily Lewis: Right. We have three site sponsorships available now, and sponsors can also reserve spots for 2014. As long as the sponsorship is paid for before the end of this year, we'll send those sponsorship proceeds along with our own donation to Heifer International. Email us at info@ctrlclickcast.com to reserve a spot.

Lea Alcantara: Perfect. Now, for news in the world of content management systems, Perch is still running their 50% license discount for developers who want to try Perch for their own portfolio or agency site, so if you've never ever used Perch before and you want to try it out on your portfolio site, go ahead and grab that deal. The link is in the show notes.

Emily Lewis: Also, as Jack McDade mentioned in our [last episode](#), Statamic 1.6.5 was released on the last week of November, but I think the bigger news is that they also announced Bloodhound, which is a search add-on for Statamic. It looks pretty cool.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, awesome, and in the world of Craft, they have released Craft Fundamentals Virtual Classroom.



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Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, it's led by Ben Parizek, who is an upcoming guest in 2014. As of this recording, there are still seven seats left, so if you want to have official Craft training to kick start your next Craft project, check it out. We'll have the link in the show notes.

Emily Lewis: All right, and then a final reminder that everyone who is an ExpressionEngine user, that as of the first week of this month -- of December 7th -- ExpressionEngine v1 is no longer supported. EllisLab considers that as a legacy product, and so if you are in a v1 project and you are in a situation where you can upgrade, you might want to consider it.

Lea Alcantara: And if we've overlooked news about a CMS you favor or are interested in, let us know and we'll get it on our radar for future episodes.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: So including the EE Podcast, this is our third year-end review episode!

Emily Lewis: And it has gone by, but in like the best way possible, like time flies when you're having fun. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I know. So why don't we get right to it. This year we want to do something a little bit different. We want to talk about our top three learnings in tech, business and life.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: So why don't we get started with tech?

Emily Lewis: Okay, well, I've given some thought to this, and it's really hard to pick the top three things in all of these areas.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I know.



Emily Lewis: Because some of it is about timing, like what I did last week versus what I did back in February. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Sure, sure.

Emily Lewis: But my top thing that I learned about a CMS, and I always suspected this, is how important planning is.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And I've always been a huge proponent of documentation planning. You can attest to this. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yes. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Because I'm constantly sending you lists and things like that.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: But I've never really gone completely OCD in my CMS planning until this year.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: In fact, this past month for a project we're working on, I'm not sure if you remember, Leevi Graham gave a great presentation about three years ago at EECl.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah.

Emily Lewis: And he detailed Newism's paper plan. Well, it's been on my radar ... it's like literally been one of those little things in the back of my head that I think about every time. And I think it's because you and I are finally working together that I wanted to put what's normally in my head and I just build out, on paper to sort of run it by you.



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Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: So the fact that I had another person in the workflow, I guess, probably inspired me. But I created our own like really, really, really detailed ExpressionEngine CMS build plan.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And it's got all the things that Leevi recommended which is defining your channels, custom fields, field groups, categories, templates ... but then I took it like another level. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: And I knew some of the add-ons we are using and so I incorporated some of the add-on configurations like the Wygwam editor configurations, the different page types for Structure, and even Low Variables. And I swear I built the CMS for this thing in like two hours, like a record time for me.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Because I think most of the time when I did it before is, I did all this planning, like I had notes that I referenced. But I'd build it and then I'd see something that needs to be changed and I go and change that. So I was making changes after something had been built. This time I did it all on paper and when something occurred to me that needed to be changed, it was on paper.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And then by the time it came to building it in EE, it was like I was going through a checklist.



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Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah, I know. It's definitely really helped see the entire project in a larger scale in one place because usually what Emily and I do is we tend to share documents in Google Docs.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And so we're able to comment on very, very specific things, so it's really easy to be like, "Okay, so this one specific thing, maybe there should be the different naming convention, or this other thing, why should this be in a channel versus like a Low Variable or whatever."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: It just made the conversation a lot more streamlined too.

Emily Lewis: I will never ever, ever try and build a CMS without something like this again.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And I want to come up with the same kind of planning approach for any CMS that we work with. I like building the CMS, but this was great, like I felt really confident in what I've built when it was all said and done.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: So it was just fantastic. Thank you, Leevi! [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs] And speaking of CMSes, for me, my learning was just really wrapping my head around the D-R-Y, DRY process.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



Lea Alcantara: And thinking a little bit more programmatically about templating. And I mean, it already started when we started talking about [DRY in past episodes and with ExpressionEngine](#) and stuff. But when I was developing our first site in Craft, and it's specifically because of how the templating system works there, it really allowed me to think about content in a lot more abstract manner or repeatable manner or what should be more of a layout template versus a content like widget section or whatever, and like breaking those things down.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And to me I think that's just a really good way to move forward in general when developing any site in the CMS.

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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: It's just really trying to figure out, like how do I make these items a lot more DRY?

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And it's still an ongoing process, but just keeping that mindset already improves the way the templates work.

Emily Lewis: I think the best thing is when we can talk about the things we learned, and we learned them when we were billing time. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yes. [Laughs] Yes.

Emily Lewis: And that's really nice too.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I know. That was great, and I mean, I think that's a generally good advice.



Emily Lewis: Yeah. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: If you can get a paying project that might not be like high stakes or anything like that, then that would be a good opportunity where you can learn something new while still being paid for it.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees] One of the other things that I've learned this year that I'm so glad I finally took the time was using a CSS preprocessing language.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: For me I picked Sass, and to be honest, I did not do much research. I just sort of looked and saw what most of the people who I know how they write CSS or they write code and what they were recommending, and just went with Sass. But since trying it, and I guess it was in the second quarter or early second quarter of this year, I've used it every single time because it saves me so much time.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And you can get really organized with it, and it's kind of reenergized my love for CSS. I mean, I love front-end development, but as you know writing CSS you can get into a rut sometimes, especially if you aren't pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone. With this, it just makes me love what the potential of writing CSS can be.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I would agree, like I mean, I've only started dabbling in Sass, not as much as you obviously, but for one of our projects, we did a live Style Tile.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



Lea Alcantara: And so an in-browser Style Tile as opposed to a Photoshop document which is what I used to deal with, and because I started using a Sass file and using that language, it was just like, “This is much faster.”

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And I was able to have different groups of styles to show different types of type options or whatever really easily because you can nest things.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: You could say this or that or the other. Oh, it’s just amazing.

Emily Lewis: How was picking up the syntax for you?

Lea Alcantara: Pretty easy really.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: It’s just a matter of like, “Well, what does this do?”

Emily Lewis: Right, exactly. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Knowing the right thing to call. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, like for example, what I find interesting is that the word “include” means different things for a CMS, the type of CMS, whether you’re using Sass ... [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: It’s like, “What does that actually mean? Are you actually like just pulling and embedding, or are you applying something or what?” Right?



Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So just like with learning any type of language, it's kind of like what's the vocabulary here?

Emily Lewis: Yeah, exactly.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And speaking of learning, just for our listeners ... so I want to give a two thumbs up to A Book Apart, Dan Cederholm's *Sass For Web Designers*. It's number ten in the A Book Apart series. And I don't know if you've had a chance to read it yet, Lea, but I did, and a lot of that stuff I already knew, but kind of almost every time I pick one of these publications from A Book Apart, they have just little tidbits, little things that I'm not thinking of. And it's such an easy book to get through that you can really read it relatively quickly and find out those little tidbits, highlight them in your e-reader or mark them with Post-Its like I did.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: So definitely a good resource to pick up, I think.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, and in general, the A Book Apart series is pretty good for that type of thing.

Emily Lewis: So how about you, have you got another favorite tech lesson you learned this year?

Lea Alcantara: I think probably the biggest one in maybe several years. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: It's having an actual version control workflow...

Emily Lewis: Yes, yes.



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Lea Alcantara: That works. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Yes, yes.

Lea Alcantara: Thanks to one of our previous guest, Ian Pitts, for taking the time out to give us a workshop about it, now we actually are doing it as opposed to thinking about version control in the abstract.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And I think mostly because we're not computer science programmers, we're front-end developers. At least, I've never really tackled version control mostly because I thought like you have to have to do everything on the command line. And in the end, that's not really like that much of a big of a deal, but it's kind of the learning curve was a lot more intimidating. But once we figured it out that there were other tools to deal with like we used Beanstalk and Tower.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then just actually going through the motions and writing it all down means it's workable.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, and for me, I think I had like a comprehension barrier to version control.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Because [Ian came on the show on EE Podcast](#) – I don't know, a year and a half ago or something like that with Adam Wiggall -- to talk about this, and what they described made sense like you said in abstract manner and the benefits really sounded good. But I always had a hard time wrapping my head around how it worked, and I think it was because of some of the language and the way of describing how it works and defining what is your development environment versus staging



versus production and all that other stuff. Going through it, documenting it and then using it each time, I really feel like I have a nice, solid grasp on version control.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And it's been so great to have that be part of our projects.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And also, it doesn't take too much time to get the fundamentals of it set up at the beginning.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, absolutely. It's like once it's all written down, then you just follow the steps and keep dealing with that.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: I mean, we haven't been without hiccups. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Oh yeah, like I overwrote your database the other day. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, and I think that's a general issue with version control every time you work with a database.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: It's like forgetting that somebody was there before and overwriting a database or whatever. But generally speaking like whenever we were working with templates or other static files, it's just really nice and easy to see where the change were and things like that, and it's just great.

Emily Lewis: Yeah. That was a really good investment of our time.

Lea Alcantara: Absolutely.



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Emily Lewis: Okay, so aside from the version control, I have another tech thing that I'm really excited I learned about this year. Well, it's sort of a process thing as opposed to a tech thing, but I always defined like my projects to have phases, and one of the phases is the visual design phase.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And previously, I viewed that pretty much as just the exclusive phase for building comps, and building comps for all the views, so if it was a responsive project, that was building static PNGs for the client to approve with all the different pages that are in the scope as well as the views in the scope. But then when Ben Callahan was on the show for [episode 3 of CTRL+CLICK](#), it really clicked for me that the visual design phase can actually be more concurrent and overlapping with others. For example, we're using Live Wires which came from nGen Works, I think.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And I forget who ...

Lea Alcantara: Travis.

Emily Lewis: Travis, okay.

Lea Alcantara: Gertz. Travis Gertz.

Emily Lewis: So these are browser-based wireframes, and when I did wireframes before, it was kind of – what's that called – waterfall where the wireframes had to be done first and then I did the comps.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: But now, the wireframes, we're doing those and it's defining a lot of the visual stuff because they're in browser and so we can address a lot of those responsive layouts and things like that in that phase.



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Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And then apply it to visual design. But instead of doing comps for all of the views, we then moved visual design into what I used to keep as the front-end phase.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: So they approve comps for the desktop, but then we move right into front end. And so the design for mobile and device views happens in the browser.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: So we're just kind of like in redefining of the process and what is, in my mind at least, how I want to plan for things, what is visual design.

Lea Alcantara: What's interesting is that this is kind of similar to my thinking back with version control. Like whenever I started reading articles about responsive design and the processes and all these kind of things, it all just seems more abstract until we actually try to do it.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Like basically when we decided, "Okay, let's try to do Live Wires and browser wireframes," we're like, "Oh, let's just do it. Let's just try it."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: But then the process of actually doing it like gives you the beginnings of a workflow.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: A new workflow that actually now is clicking in your mind. Because it's not abstract anymore, you're actually dealing with it. And when we were doing that, my final tech learning was



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really sort of design related. Is that it's really tedious to create a full-fledged static comps and they really have no benefit.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: They really have no extra benefit. For one of our clients this year, we still did some things old school and we sent a ton of comps to them.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And they had a one-line response to our mobile comps.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: "It looks good." [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: "It looks good." [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And it's like, "Why did I spend all that time building all those comps, and it really was for no reason." Because at the end of the day, you're building a design system, so the look and feel is essentially the same throughout the entire things, with may be a little tweak here and there in terms of content priority and emphasis or whatever. But once you've decided like what the color scheme, the type and the general layout items (which they've seen in the Live Wires) there's really no point in showing all those static comps. I do think that a full-fledged static comp still has its place, but not for every single view.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

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Lea Alcantara: And not for like every single like page layout because once the main things have been accepted, then generally speaking, you'll be building out the design for all of them based on



that. So maybe one or two major comps rather than multiple, especially since we have wireframes in the browser now and the client understands the tangible site look and feel more through the browser because that's, at the very end of the day, that's where they'll be looking at the website. And we've already gone even better feedback simply because it's in the browser in terms of how the navigation is working for them, whether or not they wanted to click on something to view, to reveal something versus whether it should be shown right away, those types of things. It's much, much harder to have those conversations if you're just sending them static comps.

Emily Lewis: And I do think, at least for this one particular client where we did all the comps versus showing them things in the browser, the kind of feedback that was most valuable when they've viewed something in the browser was, for them, where the page fold was. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Do you know what I mean?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: If you send the comp of a mobile view and it's just like a long screen or with the desktop view, the same thing, and it was something that was a priority for them and no matter how much we tried to educate them about there not really being a fold, it was important. And so them having the context of viewing things on their devices and in their browsers helped us have that conversation with them.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, absolutely.

Emily Lewis: All right, so let's talk about some of the things we learned this year about business.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



Emily Lewis: So I wanted to start off by just talking about human resources.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Which is something I never thought in my entire life I would ever know anything about other than my mom did it a long time ago when I was a kid. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: But by virtue of hiring you, I learned more about HR. And I can't say it's my favorite aspect of running the business, but I do like that I know the basics. And that the investment of time I made in understanding what was going on as well as even hiring a consultant to help put together all of the paperwork and help establish policies, I genuinely feel those are true investments. I mean, if you and I grow the business further, then all of those things that I learned and we've documented and we have saved, the documents saved as templates and things like that, it will be easier when that time comes.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it was definitely a huge learning curve.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And it really kind of just showed, in general, like learning how business works versus like being a contractor, which is it is a business, but it's a different level of business.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: So being a part of that process was definitely interesting. I don't envy... [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: I don't envy anyone that has to do that, but if you are considering learning more about HR (our listeners, that is), Emily and I have been writing a lot about our experiences in the past



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few months on [Emily Lewis Design](#). So if you want to learn more about that, we are writing about it, [subscribe to our blog](#) and you'll find out more.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And speaking of that, I've been writing a lot about how it was like to work in the US, so one of my biggest learnings is that it's way more complicated than it should be, seriously.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: As a Canadian knowledge worker, a professional-type person, I would think that there would be easier processes for me to get to the States.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: But it really isn't.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And there's a lot of things you have to do to make sure you're prepared and informed before you make a jump across the border. I think the most shocking thing that I really realized was how much power a border control person has over whether or not you're able to cross.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, even if you're completely legitimate, you have to really dot your i's, cross your t's, etc.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



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Lea Alcantara: Make sure everything is perfect because any type of misunderstanding could prevent you from crossing the border. And I mean, this is even true, I'm actually worried going back to Edmonton for Christmas.

Emily Lewis: Oh, really?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, because, again, I'd have to go to the border control and they'll be like, "Why are you going there?" I have to say I'm visiting my family. Then when I'm heading back to the States, a lot of people have been telling me like, "Bring your TN documentation."

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: They were just saying like, "Most likely," they're like, "Most likely you won't get any trouble."

Emily Lewis: Just that you're on a safe side.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, because they might ask for it. They might ask for like your proof, and the passport saying I have the visa might not be enough, right?

Emily Lewis: Oh, gosh.

Lea Alcantara: And that's because there's an issue with training, I think.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And....

Emily Lewis: And that's...

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: You can find that in the government everywhere. [Laughs]



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Lea Alcantara: Yeah, so there might be an issue with training or there's like trigger phrases and words and things like that. I mean, again, it's just being overly cautious. Most people aren't going to really question you if you're saying, "I'm visiting my family. Now, I'm heading back to work." Right?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: But just in case, it's always like a "just in case."

Emily Lewis: I feel like everything involved with you getting your visa and you being an employee is "just in case." It's kind of like "You should do this. We're not entirely sure why." But it's a reason to because there's lack of consistency in terms of what you should do and what you shouldn't do.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I think a lot of the hassles is because there's just a lot of lack of training and lack of understanding. So I know we were super annoyed by all the paperwork we had to do.

Emily Lewis: But it was worth it.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, but it was worth it because it protected us.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So in case there were any misunderstanding, there's a paper trail, there's proof, we're legally allowed to do this. So it's one of those things where it's just being over prepared is actually regularly prepared, I think.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] That's a good way of putting it. Sort of along the same lines about being prepared and I guess jumping through hoops is that contracts are kind of like that.

Lea Alcantara: Yes.



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Emily Lewis: So when I started my business almost four years ago, I put together a contract based on various contracts of trusted colleagues and some resources I found online, and then I just kind of went with them for a while, and then we had that [great episode with Paul Burton](#).

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And he gave me a lot of great information. I even followed up with him in email after the fact and got *even more* great information. And really did like an overhaul on my contracts.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And that was last year, and yet I did it again this year. And mostly because you and I joined forces, and I wanted to, in a way, consolidate some of the things you were doing with what I was doing and do a single document that we would both be comfortable with.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: But at that point, the timing was such that I was working with or bidding on a project with a prospect, and they really didn't seem to like my contracts, and in fact, seemed to feel like I was trying to take advantage of them.

Lea Alcantara: Weird.

Emily Lewis: Which made me really nervous because, frankly, I didn't know what I was doing. Do you know what I mean?

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: Like I put the contracts together with advice from other people, but nothing official.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



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Emily Lewis: And so, after you and I sort of consolidated our information, I hired an attorney and had him review all of the contract documents, and it was so worth it.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: It was expensive, I think.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: But I think attorneys are expensive in general.

Lea Alcantara: Sure, yeah, yeah.

Emily Lewis: But for one, he helped address little things that are like stupid and ridiculous, but apparently make a difference in certain states. Like in New Mexico, how you refer to client. If you have a header in your document, you've got to use a colon. It's ridiculous, but he says or he advised that it makes a difference if I'm dealing with a court here in New Mexico. But aside from that, he also assured me that what I actually had to begin with was far more protective of the client and it was my own business.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: So that prospect who was getting themselves all worked up, I ended up not moving forward with them.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: But I think, who knows what their problem was, but ultimately, the language I had in there wasn't even protecting my business appropriately enough.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



Emily Lewis: And now that he's gone through those things, you and I have kind of standardized everything, I feel really good about the contracts I'm putting out there.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And I don't have that insecurity of, "Oh, what if I did something wrong, or what if I am somehow screwing the client but don't even realize it?"

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, and I mean, part of it is that maybe they're the one who's trying to screw you, right?

Emily Lewis: Oh yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Because they want to have more permissive items or dismiss you easily or something like that, and if you don't know that, then you don't know.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And that just having actual legal advice to say, "Yes, this is fine."

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: What they're doing is possibly just intimidation tactics for who knows why.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: But at least at this point, we can make informed decisions based on that.

Emily Lewis: And now, I have an attorney who's a go-to resource who knows our contracts.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And so if we're dealing with a prospect who is pushing back on some things, I send it to him.



Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And I say, “Is this reasonable? Is this going to endanger my business or my rights?” And then I can make a decision and negotiate with that prospect in a more informed manner, and again, it is totally worth the money.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, absolutely, and I would say that contracts is part of like a larger group of business documentation.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And I know that it’s kind of mundane.

Emily Lewis: I love it.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: I would say though I think it’s one of the more overlooked aspects of running a business, just business documentation.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Like when we were talking about the tech stuff, when I was solo, documentation was essentially in my head.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

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Lea Alcantara: With maybe like notes on white boards and here and there, with those kinds of things. But when we started working together, we started formalizing the process of how we wanted



to market ourselves. So we weren't just documenting things like version control or whatever. We also started to document how we wanted to do our social media strategy, giving ourselves to-dos for every particular tasks. Now that it's written down, it gets done.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: It's no longer just an abstract concept of, "Oh, you know what, we should do this," and then it just doesn't get done, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Because eventually, we're going to forget some sort of aspects, some sort of conversations, some sort of meeting, but if it's written down and then we decided, "Okay, now, here's the new process," and we write down that process, it just gets done.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And that things just get more efficient, and I honestly get jazzed about it.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Because to me, I'm the type of person that gets anxiety for when things are not certain, right?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: When things are uncertain, I mean, that's just life, but when it's written down, it takes away some of that uncertainty to me.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



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Lea Alcantara: And so I feel a lot more confident in actually doing something simply because it's written down.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, I couldn't agree with you more. I loved to do documentation before. I've reached a whole new level of love this past year. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: It's helped also us get on the same page. I mean, generally speaking, you and I are on the same page, but you get an idea about something, I'm going to get an idea about something else and taking the time to document it and then just sharing it with other person means that you and I can always start from the same point of reference.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, and I want to mention that it's never like always like a giant Google Doc (which we do have), but sometimes it's just we just create a new to-do list with something called like "business ideas" or "marketing ideas" or "article ideas", right?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And we just update it when an idea comes by, and eventually when we have a meeting, sometimes those items come up and it actually get done. They just get done, so that's great.

Emily Lewis: Yeah. Oh! Okay, so my third business lesson this year...

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And this one I really owe to you, Lea.

Lea Alcantara: Awww.

Emily Lewis: It's to think bigger.



Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And it comes down to the fact that when I started this business, I really thought of myself as a freelancer, and my definition of that kept my perspective of what I can do kind of small. And so the types of projects I went after were kind of small. But when you and I were just at the beginning of talking about working together formally, you kind of assigned both of us some tasks. We needed to define what success was for each of us.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: The type of projects we each individually wanted to work on, how much money we wanted to make.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And money is one of those things I don't like talking about, I don't like thinking about because it just stresses me out.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: But it made me realize that I needed to think of myself and this business bigger.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Not just in terms of the fact that you and I are now working together and so two of us can do more together, but even on my own, I should have been bidding on bigger projects.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Even on my own, I should have defined what success was, you know?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



Emily Lewis: And I guess my definition for success previously was pay my bills and keep enjoying the life that I have.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: But that was it. It didn't go beyond that, and you've pushed me. You're like, "Well, if you have that, what else do you want?"

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And so once we did that together, you and I have both seen it, we started going after bigger projects and we won them. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Imagine that! Set your sights high! So yeah, I'm thinking bigger these days.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, now, I think that's a struggle for anyone that is by themselves.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Even myself, like back in Edmonton, it wasn't like I was going after like super giant projects, but like I remember one of the things I did every single year was the challenge of lessen the amount of projects, but increase the amount I make, is that possible?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And year after year, it's just like even if it's down one more project, but the cost of everything just increased, that means I have more time because I had less projects to work on, so it's just giving yourself these little goals here and there. Thinking bigger doesn't necessarily mean, "Oh, I want to be bagillionaire or whatever." [Laughs]



Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Because everyone's idea of success and what's sustainable for them and what makes sense is different. But I think why not, like why not try?

Emily Lewis: Absolutely, and taking the money out of it. I like doing the quick portfolio-type project. They're fine and they're pretty easy most of the time.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: But I do want to do more complex projects. I want to be challenged more, and so if I set a goal to have a bigger project in that sense, then I get to learn, which is another thing that defines success for me. So like you said, it's not really just about the money. The money, if you figure out your billing right, you should make more money going after bigger projects, but it's so much more than the money.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I mean, at the end of the day, money is a metric. Just one of the *other* metrics.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Like for me, I remember, and I'll talk about this when we're talking about the quality of life stuff, but one of my goals was just I need to take more vacations, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And sometimes that means I need to make a little bit more money, therefore I'm able to do that without worrying really.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.



Lea Alcantara: Because I mean, that's the other caveat really about like money in general is that you can make a whole bunch of money, but are you going to be stressing out, or are you going to be overworked with you doing this?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Like really, I read this article somewhere. It's not about like just randomly assigning a number. What's enough?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: That was the thing, like what does enough mean to you? But I would have to say that my final business learning, the biggest business learning I had for this year was really learning to let go of all responsibility.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: I guess that's part of the vacation thing too. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: I think we're both really very independent people, and we're used to doing everything ourselves.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Even if we didn't like it, we just did it because we were the ones doing it.

Emily Lewis: We had to.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. But I think that once we started divvying up the responsibilities with projects and even just business tasks, marketing tasks, etc., my enjoyment of work increased exponentially.



Emily Lewis: Yes.

Lea Alcantara: You were doing things you wanted to do and were great at, and vice versa.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So therefore, because of that, we were really confident in what we were doing.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Basically, to me being super blunt about what we actually wanted to do made it so that responsibility is shared in a way that makes the most sense, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So that means we're really playing to each other's strengths.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: So for example, I'm dabbling in a little bit of Sass so I know what you're talking, but definitely your strength is front-end development and my strength is design. So it's one of those things where I just feel way more confident in our projects in general.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Because I know that any weaknesses that each other has is buoyed up, you know?

Emily Lewis: Yeah, absolutely.

Lea Alcantara: Because somebody else is taking responsibility with their strength.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, and also, dividing up those responsibilities, I think, like you've sort of alluded to, we're both enjoying our work more.



Lea Alcantara: Yes.

Emily Lewis: Me working on what I like to do the most makes me happy, and you doing or working on what you like to do the most makes you happy.

Lea Alcantara: Yes.

Emily Lewis: And the stuff that we don't like to do the most, we share. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: So it's a little bit better.

Lea Alcantara: Exactly, exactly.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, so that's definitely, and you know what, that sort of leads nicely in this like quality of life thing as well. I mean, it's a business lesson, but it's also a quality of life lesson.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I would say that's pretty true, so what would you say is your first learning?

Emily Lewis: This one is really hard because I still don't have balance in my professional and personal life, and I guess that the lesson is I have a lot of work to do still to find that balance and define what that balance looks like. And frankly, 2013 has been a great year in terms of all the new things I've done. But it's been a lot like juggling nonstop. I definitely feel like it's been very hard for me to focus on my personal life because there were so many new factors introduced into my professional life this year. And so I think that's the lesson I learned is that I still have a whole lot of work to do to find out or find a balance.

Lea Alcantara: Well, that kind of reminds me of [our episode with Carl Smith](#).

Emily Lewis: Oh, it's such a good one.



Lea Alcantara: Yeah, and he was talking about how sometimes professional life takes a priority and sometimes personal life takes the stage.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So I'm not quite sure if it's really possible to have both on an even keel at the same time.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: But I think we shouldn't really stop trying.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Because, otherwise, I think that's where the possibility of things getting one sided. Because I think as long as you try to balance it, it's part of the active getting things more on an even keel. It's just more about maybe saying, "Okay, now, the priority is this, and I'm not going to try to have the other thing happen at the same time right now."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then not beating yourself up when it's not perfect all the time.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, that's, I think, one of my biggest problems.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: I'm a perfectionist. If it's not perfect, I'm worried. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Because you're Virgo.

Emily Lewis: Yeah. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]



Emily Lewis: I'm like an obsessive-compulsive Virgo. It's like the worst thing you can possibly be.

Lea Alcantara: Not everything has been awful, obviously. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: No, no, no, no, not at all. It's just one of those things. I'm a black and white thinker, unfortunately. I think it's a good point, not beating yourself up if it's not perfect all the time. And kind of speaking to that, there is one area in my personal life that I've been really proud of and I feel like I have been successful with a goal was to be better connected to the people I really love and care about.

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Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: Even thought those people are all over the world, I mean, other than my boyfriend, there's no one here near me who is like a really good, good friend or a family member. And I used social media for a long time to try and stay in touch with people and thought I was connected, but I really wasn't connected to those people the way I wanted to be, because I really love them. I really care about them and I want them to know that. And so my sister and I, for example, she visited in the spring and we decided that rather than hope that one of us would remember to call each other every so often (because life happens).

Lea Alcantara: Sure, of course.

Emily Lewis: It goes by so quickly, we scheduled a weekly video Skype every week and we're still doing it to this day.

Lea Alcantara: Awesome.



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Emily Lewis: We talk for like an hour and a half each time, and it's nice to know the details of her life, and not get them off of social media, but get them straight from her face.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And even my college roommate who's one of my closest friends, she lives in Switzerland right now and she and I have a monthly phone call every month. I guess that's the definition of monthly. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: And I'm even doing a monthly calls on Skype with some of my webbie friends who've really been there for me over the years and who I want to check in with more than just seeing what's on their Twitter feed.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: So I'm really pleased that I've been able to keep that going and getting those on the schedule and following through on it.

Lea Alcantara: My learning is actually quite similar to that. In terms of personal relationships, I think it's really important to be proactive and not passive about it.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Since I'm a new person in Seattle...

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, like all my family and friends are like scattered around the globe. Some of them are in Edmonton, etc., and I've been going around meeting a bunch of people, but I realized that



I need to become better at following up on people's invites and not saying "no" for no real good reason.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: That's the introverted part of me.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: It's funny because a lot of people meet me and they see me as the extrovert.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And really the reality is that I'm an ambivert. I'm the type of person who can be extrovert at times and then I need to cocoon myself and just sit and read a book and no one bother me.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And sometimes, and that's part of the reason why I think I do well working at home because if I was pure extrovert, working from home would definitely not work.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: But to just give you an example, just very recently, I hung out with Seamus [Holman] from Gridwork who lives here in Seattle ... he actually lives in my neighborhood.

Emily Lewis: Oh, nice!

Lea Alcantara: And he recently invited me out to a design talk and I almost said no, and I thought about it because it was like there's really no real good reason to say no.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.



Lea Alcantara: Except maybe laziness or shyness.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And probably it was kind of like a mixture of both because it's one of those things where, well, I guess I've "known" Seamus like online, social media, as you were mentioning, but that doesn't mean like I really knew him, and then he was inviting me out.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then I thought to myself like, "Why am I saying no? I'm doing nothing that evening." [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And he's in the neighborhood, and it's not a big deal, like everybody goes home at the same time. So in the end, I said yes.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: And because of that, I met his super lovely wife, Liz.

Emily Lewis: Nice.

Lea Alcantara: And we chatted up a storm, and then I ended up having a great conversations with other people that night and listened to a really cool talk that just made me think about business and communication a bit more. So just in general, I do believe that I need to become more open and proactive because people are reaching out and then I have to reach out too.

Emily Lewis: Or accept their reach out.



Lea Alcantara: Yes, yeah, because sometimes when people reach out, I don't say yes, and that's not because I don't like them or I don't want to do it, it's just I'm having an introverted moment.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Or maybe an insecurity moment really because it's like, "Oh, I don't really know them, but it's just like, "Well, that's because I haven't hang out with you and have not gone to the thing you invited me to.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: So yeah, it's just being more proactive is a good thing in your personal life.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, and I definitely agree with that. So my last quality of life lesson that I learned this year, and I think I was sort of alluding to it when I was discussing staying connected to my friends and family: social media is no longer something that's important to me. And I know that that might surprise some people because there was a time I really relied on social media to really stay connected. But I think I misperceived what connected was at that time.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: And I felt like I had stronger connections with people even though they weren't real in the sense of we didn't stay in touch in person, and we didn't really know each other except through back and forth banter on Twitter and Facebook.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: And while all of those things have value, for me right now, at this point in my life, I'm really trying to have connections based on real conversations and real relationships. And so I'm just



not spending time on social media like I used to, and I was doing this a bit last year, but I was mostly just guilty about it.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Because people would say things like, “Oh, you’re not tweeting much anymore. What are you up to or whatever?” This year, I don’t feel guilty about it at all. It’s not for me right now. It doesn’t fit in my life, and it is a huge time suck. I can’t justify the time on it, especially if it’s just random things here and there. But if it’s random things here and there, all day long. My business is more important for my time, or a real phone conversation with a friend is more important for my time. So my lesson this year from that is that social media and my distance from it this past year has helped me really see that I wasn’t actually connected through it the way I want to be connected.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: And that’s been good because, I don’t know, I like real. I don’t like fake.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, there’s only so much you could do with a 140 characters, right?

Emily Lewis: True, exactly.

Lea Alcantara: And in this way, taking a step back allowed you to have further conversations, and I think honestly, that’s one of my favorite things about having this type of podcast, right?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So for example, like we had Jack McDade on in the last show, and I mean, I have been following him on social media for a long time.

Emily Lewis: He’s such an awesome guy!



Lea Alcantara: He's so funny, you know? [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And I've never...

Emily Lewis: You don't get that sometimes on social media.

Lea Alcantara: Exactly, I mean, there are so many like to me a lot of really cool people in our industry, in our community and all that fun stuff, but I don't really know them, right?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And it's fun for me with this podcast that we have at least one hour of their time.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And then that one hour of time, I feel like I've gotten to know them a lot more.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And that's fun to me. So yeah, I definitely agree with that. I mean, there's a time and place for social media like I personally love it. I'm on it all the time. I'm still updating people with my food photos.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And fun stuff like that.

Emily Lewis: And I don't judge you at all.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]



Lea Alcantara: And all that's well and good, but it's just learning to know when to turn it off.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And also really understanding that that's not the best communication if you wanted to have a deep and meaningful relationship. Like to me, the best perspective I think you can have with social media is that it's the *beginning* of the conversation, it's not the conversation.

Emily Lewis: Yes.

Lea Alcantara: It's just the introduction. That's all it is, and that it's the introduction to have more conversations in a different medium, whether that means in person at a conference or during Skype or actually having long form emails versus just short conversations.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: That's how you get to know somebody, and if that's what you want, I think social media is so great at making the introduction...

Emily Lewis: Those connections, yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, because it's so hard to just even get connected to certain people, and I mean, that's why it's so great to have social media. I mean, if it wasn't for social media, I wouldn't have known about you, you know?

Emily Lewis: Yeah, I mean, I know what you're talking about. I mean, if it wasn't for social media, I would never have gotten my book deal.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: I know that for a plain fact. I just wouldn't have. It definitely had a tremendous amount of value for me in my professional life. It's just right now, it's not fitting in.



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Lea Alcantara: Yeah, and I mean, in general like when we're thinking about stuff that's fitting in, one thing, my final thought about life learnings, is that I need to make more time that's not business related, that's separated.

Emily Lewis: Amen.

Lea Alcantara: Like separated from business, and that means, and I kind of alluded to it earlier, purposely making more vacation plans.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: In the past, most of the time I've been extending conference trips to make them into pseudo-personal trips at tail end.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: But that's still mixing business with pleasure, and I mean, that worked for me for a while. And especially like when you're starting with your own business and you're strapped for money, like it was just a good way to have some pleasure with business, and then you can write off part of that at least. So that was one of the appeals for that. But really, I think it's important to just have real down time without opening a web browser or thinking about the web at all, business or work. I think in many ways, which is sort of like an aside, it's like not just a vacation where like you go to a beach or whatever, but I think it's important to have time vacation with non-techies.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Like make friends with people who have no clue what you're saying.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Do you know what I mean?



Emily Lewis: Yeah, I know what you...

Lea Alcantara: Because, I mean, sometimes I feel like I have all these friends who they understand HTML and CSS and then we talk about web stuff, and I mean, that's great, that's fantastic, but sometimes I just want to talk about like cooking.

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Emily Lewis: Right. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Because that's something that like I really love to do. So like, for example, my new foodie friend who's a chef, like all we do is talk about food and that's something so much fun, and that's a break.

Emily Lewis: Oh, that's great.

Lea Alcantara: And that's a break, that I feel like that's a mental break from work.

Emily Lewis: Oh, yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And I think that's so important because I love the web, that's why I'm here.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: But I think in some ways part of the issue with our industry is that it's super insular, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then we tend to have like a bit of an echo chamber, and sometimes you want to have conversations with people who are totally outside that and that actually I think does bring perspective to your own business life and just tech career too.



Emily Lewis: Oh, absolutely.

Lea Alcantara: Sometimes one of the annoying things I read about in blogs and tech stuff is people making assumptions over user experience.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then whenever you actually have in your social life that's non-techie, then you understand that "normal" people don't do the same things that tech people do.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And then that makes you have more sympathy towards your clients, I think.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: It makes you a better professional, so you can learn the language you need to use to explain to a non-tech person what they need to do, right?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then make and use metaphors and all these kinds of things. That doesn't happen if all you do is talk tech talk to somebody, right?

Emily Lewis: Absolutely right.

Lea Alcantara: So whenever a non-techie person asks me what I do and whatever, then I have a totally different conversation than somebody who's in the industry.

Emily Lewis: Right, I couldn't agree with you more. I love my non-web friends. I mean, I love my web friends too.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs] Of course.



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Emily Lewis: But my non-web friends I feel like remind me of what's in the world.

Lea Alcantara: Yes.

Emily Lewis: Most days I'm on the internet, and that's where my world is.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, that's a good one. So that's looking back, how about we look forward before we finish up this episode?

Lea Alcantara: Sounds good. What do you want to see in the new year?

Emily Lewis: Well, there are three things that I have kind of listed as my top priorities, and these are all business related. I think my number one priority is find more balance in my personal life, but business or tech-wise, I want to get a stronger grasp on Craft.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: Because we did the training that Mijingo provided, the video training.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And that was great. You did the bulk of the development for that project, and so I was really only looking at it as from a reference point, so I definitely want to get my hands into it a little bit more. But even more importantly, from that I want to create the type of base resources that we have for EE for Craft and for other CMSes.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Like I mentioned in the beginning, that project planning document, I want something like that for any CMS that we add into our toolkit.



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Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: So that's something that I want to do better with this year. The second thing I wanted to do, and it's also along the same line, is I want to have more base front-end assets.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: So I mentioned the Live Wires earlier, and you've even mentioned the Style Tile, and I want to take those concepts and really modularize the CSS and HTML that we start with each time.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: And use for the Live Wires or use for validating interaction requirements. So yeah, just creating base files that we can obviously always evolve over time, but we have something to start with each time that's really, really modular. I guess that's the key part.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: It's that not just an asset or a project base, but that it's really modular and we can drop things in based on the project requirements. And then my last thing that I want to do better with this upcoming year is find some way to streamline our proposal/RFP process.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Because it takes way more time than it should.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah, it does.

Emily Lewis: It really does, and maybe that's you and me being really detail oriented too early, but I don't know if that's a bad thing.



Lea Alcantara: Well, I mean, to be frank, for me, I haven't had much experience doing a ton of proposals because when I was running LeaLea Design, 90% of my projects were pure word of mouth referrals.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then the last 10% was me like answering something. So I haven't had that much time to like be super detailed about it, but definitely I think that's something else. I would agree that would be something we should try to figure out how to make more efficient.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: But I think part of the problem is that with the projects there's all these individual requirements, right?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: I think the RFP process is really broken.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then there's like a lot of weird things that they want...

Emily Lewis: The way they phrase something too can be weird. I couldn't agree with you more about the process being broken because I know some request for proposals that go out there, they have like a time period to submit questions.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: If you miss that or they don't offer that, how do you accurately scope something or propose something if you can't get those details from the client?



Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Not only to scope the project effectively, but to demonstrate that you have an understanding of their business which both you and I feel is really important.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. It's interesting. I feel like that it's really timely because on A List Apart, there is this article by Matt Griffin called *Let's Do It, What Are We Doing?*

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And basically, he was proposing that when you're responding to RFPs, he's basically explaining what a pain it is and what the issues are, but he's proposing that instead of putting giant proposal for the largest thing, it's like actually propose something smaller, even though that's not what the RFP is asking for because at the end of the day, do these people know what they actually want?

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And then if they hire you for something smaller like a Phase 1 of the project, then you can actually like...

Emily Lewis: Educate them and get those answers.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, and get those answers instead of answering the larger project proposal.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: It's definitely an interesting thing to think about especially because I don't know what kind of success rate that would be, and I think a lot of it is dependent on the final client, like how rigid is their RFP process?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



Lea Alcantara: Like how flexible is the RFP they have? Like they could mention a whole bunch of things, and then in the end, they're flexible about them all, right?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Because I think one of our clients, we answered their RFP and they were a lot more flexible than...

Emily Lewis: What the RFP suggested.

Lea Alcantara: Exactly. But I mean, a lot of that was because we had an opportunity to talk to them.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: And a lot of these RFPs, they're just so rigid.

Emily Lewis: Ugh.

Lea Alcantara: They are.

Emily Lewis: Some of them when it gets to a certain point, I'm like, "I don't want to deal with this client."

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah.

Emily Lewis: The RFP tells me what kind of client they might be, and I'm not interested in it.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. Now, that's true.

Emily Lewis: Well, how about you? What are the things that you want for yourself professionally next year in 2014?

Lea Alcantara: Well, I definitely want to solidify a better workflow for mobile design and development.



Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And I think that's kind of an ongoing thing.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: So you mentioned the assets, the base assets, let's try to figure those out. So we're doing the Style Tiles and Live Wires, but I'm like, "Well, is there a better way to do this?" Right?

Emily Lewis: Right, right.

Lea Alcantara: Just to make it a lot more clear what's going to happen.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Especially because, for example, with the Style Tiles, I was trying to figure out like how do I show the different type options they have. And I was wondering like should I have had two Style Tiles so that it's like they're looking at two pages. But then would the client get confused?

Emily Lewis: And think that's the actual design or something?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, exactly, but if everything is all in one page, like kind of together, then it's a lot more clear.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So I mean, with those, they're kind of detail things, but I'm just trying to solidify a better workflow for that.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And I think that all that's really experimentation and finding which one that we really like.



Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: In the vein of proposals actually, like to backtrack a little bit, I want not to just like respond, I want to get better at actively finding and getting leads and sales in general.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, yeah. One of my weakest areas.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, and I mean, again, part of the weakness is because I guess, it's where we create.

Emily Lewis: It's where we're great. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Well, I mean, it's great like a lot of things we get are referrals, which speaks to the fact that like the quality of work we're doing is being heard. But at the same time for the larger projects that we want to get, they tend to do the RFP process.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So we need to get better at figuring out how to get in front of an RFP at the beginning of the process because sometimes we've been getting RFPs like when it's already near the end.

Emily Lewis: Right, when it's due like in four days. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, exactly, and then even if it's a really great project that we would be perfect for, it's one of those things where you're like, "Should we respond simply because we don't have the time?" Those kinds of things.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: So I just wanted to get better at finding those leads.



Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: And then finally, I just want to get better at setting aside specific times to keep learning. So I feel like with the web, we're bombarded with a lot of articles and social media links and all this kind of things, and it's like information overload, and so I bookmark a lot of things or I buy a lot of books and then they just fill my shelf and that they're never opened.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: So I'd like to get better at setting aside specific time to prioritize for learning.

Emily Lewis: Do you mean like a time of day or like time of week or time of month?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Or something like that. Just something that's regular, but I haven't figured out what would make the most sense. But for example, with the version control, we set aside the time to do the workshop, we did it and now we're doing it like all the time, right?

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Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: I think with like learning something new or reading a book or actually reading an article and like really taking the time to think about that article too.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, in which you focus.

Lea Alcantara: Exactly, because sometimes I just read something and then I'm like I don't actually like absorb.



Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Or just pause and think thoughtfully for it because even when I do set aside some time to read, that doesn't mean I'm actually thinking about it thoughtfully or critically.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Because that's another thing too that I think our industry sometimes needs to have more exercise on is critical thinking.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Just because someone publishes an article in a publication or has written a book, that doesn't necessarily mean you should agree with them, you know?

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: Although some people could argue that, "Well, you could just publish whatever and you could agree or disagree and then that's your prerogative." But I think it takes practice to do critical thinking. You just sit and absorb.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, I agree with you entirely, taking that time to focus and learn and hopefully get your hands dirty and then to decide whether it's something that actually make sense for you, not just agreeing because someone wrote it or put it out there.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, exactly. So critical thinking and then actual time to put certain things into practice.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: But that's all the time we have for today.



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Emily Lewis: Time went by so fast.

Lea Alcantara: I know.

Emily Lewis: Like the whole year. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: I know! But before we sign off for 2013, we want to thank all of our sponsors now and in the future! We are looking for more sponsors for 2014 so please [contact us](#) if you're interested in reaching a targeted and enthusiastic audience.

Emily Lewis: And speaking of that enthusiastic audience, thank you to all of our listeners! Lea and I make this show for you, so if you have any questions or topic suggestions for the show, please contact us on our website, ctrlclickcast.com/contact, or [at-reply us on Twitter](#).

[Music starts]

Lea Alcantara: Now, it's time to thank our sponsors for this podcast, [Visual Chefs](#) and [Pixel & Tonic](#).

Emily Lewis: We also want to thank our partners, [Arcustech](#), [Devot:ee](#) and [EE Insider](#).

Lea Alcantara: We're going to be on hiatus for just a little while, but don't forget to tune in next year when we'll be talking about some of the design and development challenges of working with ad-driven sites on Thursday, January 9th.

Emily Lewis: And we've got more great topics lined up for 2014, so be sure to check out our schedule at ctrlclickcast.com/schedule. If you want to know more about the podcast, make sure you follow us on Twitter [@ctrlclickcast](#) or visit our website, ctrlclickcast.com.

Lea Alcantara: This is Lea Alcantara ...

Emily Lewis: and Emily Lewis ...



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Lea Alcantara: signing off for CTRL+CLICK CAST. See you next year!

Emily Lewis: Cheers!

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